

North
Carolina

AHEC 2008

Progress
Report

*creating a
better state
of health*



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Letter from the Director

I am pleased to offer this 2008 Progress Report for the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program. The report highlights the accomplishments of AHEC over the past year, and provides a snapshot of some of the ways we work with our community and university colleagues to address the health and health workforce needs of North Carolina.

As concerns over workforce shortages grow, the AHEC faculty and staff have responded to expand community-based training across the state. AHECs have added additional full-time faculty in pharmacy and medicine, and we work with more than 2,000 community practitioners to place students in community health centers, physician offices, hospitals, health departments, and numerous other settings throughout the state.

Health careers programming remains strong through a broad array of activities designed to attract young people to health careers. Through ongoing programs in the public schools, special conferences, and summer camps, more than 27,000 young people are reached each year to inform them about opportunities in the health field and provide them with the tools they need to enter health professions training programs.

The AHEC-based residencies in family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, ob/gyn, and general surgery continue to attract high quality residents, and approximately two-thirds of the graduates of these programs remain in North Carolina to practice. Currently, the AHEC Program is part of a new task force exploring the need to expand residency training in North Carolina to meet the growing need for physicians, particularly in primary care.

A primary mission of AHEC is to assure that practicing health professionals have the support they need to deliver the highest quality care to the people of the state. Last year AHEC continuing education programs reached more than 206,000 participants. These programs are delivered in a wide array of formats and settings. A major new initiative involves placing quality improvement specialists in each of the AHECs in order to work with physician practices, hospitals, and other health care agencies to improve the quality of care delivered in those settings.

We are pleased to offer this progress report, which provides both summary data on our various programs and services, as well as a glimpse into the lives of some of the students and health practitioners that we touch on a daily basis.



Thomas J. Bacon

Thomas J. Bacon, DrPH
Director, NC AHEC Program



"During residency training at NC AHEC sites, I worked exclusively with Latino Spanish-speaking patients. I learned of the great need for Spanish-speaking, culturally-appropriate behavioral health providers during that time. Consequently, I helped launch El Futuro, Inc. Over the last three years we have served more than 3,000 patients and now have clinical sites in two schools, two primary health care clinics, and two clinics located in the heart of the Piedmont Latino community. Now I have the privilege of mentoring residents at our clinical site for one-year rotations. The residents progress their clinical skills, improve their Spanish, and learn about the culture of the Latino community. I also teach various AHEC seminars and recently online through AHEConnect. I always dreamed of being a 'medical missionary' and through AHEC I found my calling right here in North Carolina."

- Luke Smith, MD, director of El Futuro, Inc.

Primary Care Residency Training

For more than 30 years, AHEC-based residency programs have prepared primary care physicians (particularly family physicians, general surgeons, and psychiatrists) to serve the communities of North Carolina. As of 2006, 1078 physicians practicing in the state graduated from an AHEC residency, with nearly 80% of these in primary care.

Physicians graduating from AHEC residencies are more likely to: remain in North Carolina to practice; practice in a rural area; and practice in a designated shortage area.

North Carolina's 75 non-metropolitan counties have shown greater improvement in their physician/population ratios than comparable, non-metropolitan counties in the rest of the United States over the past 30 years.

Of the 2,965 family physicians in the state, 938 have been trained in a residency supported by AHEC funds. Since 1990, 62% of all AHEC residency graduates actively practice in North Carolina, as compared to a 44% retention rate for the academic medical center residency graduates.

Active Physicians Who Completed Residency at an AHEC Location, 2006*

Family Practice	452
Internal Medicine	191
OB/GYN.....	101
Pediatrics.....	94
Emergency Medicine	72
Other Specialties	168
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Total	1,078

*most recent data available at time of printing

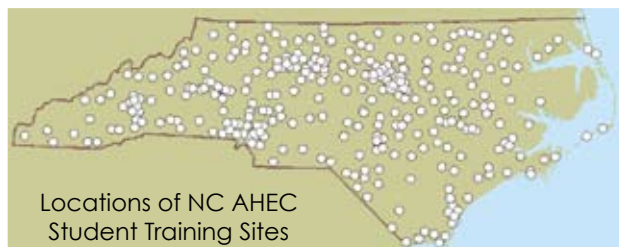
Health science students studying allied health, dentistry, medicine, nursing, public health, and pharmacy at many North Carolina colleges and universities receive part of their training under AHEC auspices in community hospitals, physicians' offices, rural health centers, public health departments, mental health centers, and other health-related settings.

Each of the nine regional AHECs facilitates quality, community-based, medical, and health science education at primary care sites. In 2007-2008, health science students completed 10,489 student months of training through AHEC-supported community-based rotations.

Practitioners across North Carolina teach medical, nurse practitioner, certified nurse midwifery, physician assistant, and PharmD students in more than 1,300 primary care sites.

AHEC-Based Student Rotations 2007-2008 (in student months)

Allied Health	1,737
Dentistry.....	210
Medicine	3,034
Nursing.....	3,064
Pharmacy	1,184
Physician Assistant.....	1,013
Public Health.....	247
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Total	10,489



Health Science Student Support

"During dental school I did two AHEC community rotations at FirstHealth Dental Care Centers in Southern Pines, Raeford and Troy. I am a pediatric dentist because of my association with AHEC, and I am working at FirstHealth now because I had such a positive experience during rotations there as a dental student. I have great respect for Dr. Sharon Harrell (standing, at left in photo) and her vision for FirstHealth dental centers. I chose pediatric dentistry because I enjoy working with children and parents, and I also believe that my skills are most useful treating underserved children. I would love to help other dental students in the future and continue to support AHEC."

- Christina Powers, DDS (seated)
FirstHealth Dental Care Centers



Professional Attendance
at AHEC CE Programs
2007-2008

Allied Health	5,806
Dentistry	7,401
Medicine	106,193
Mental Health	19,865
Nursing	18,067
Pharmacy	6,169
Public Health	7,642
Interdisciplinary	35,691
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Total	206,834

AHEConnect Facts

20,660 Registrations
77% Completion Rate
35,290 Contact Hours Awarded
107 Courses Produced
78 Online Courses Currently Available

A wide variety of continuing education (CE) programs and technical assistance services are offered by AHEC to practicing health professionals and agencies in the state. AHEC uses the latest information technology to improve access to CE programs and distance degree programs through teleconferencing, distance learning, and Web-based programming. By using innovations in technology and training providers to use new systems, AHEC improves the quality of care available to patients.

All nine AHEC centers offer training in implementing new technologies to enhance health care practice and improve patient care. Videoconferencing technology extends the AHEC network's reach for distance education, TeleHealth, and telemedicine initiatives to more than 50 public and private sites throughout the state.

In addition to face-to-face CE programs, AHEC offers online training through AHEConnect (www.aheconnect.org). This resource offers the ability to create and host online courses. This summer, AHEC launched MyAHEC (my.ncahec.net), a powerful new online tool providing personalized services and resources to the state's health care professionals including a searchable CE events calendar and transcript-tracking tools.

Support for Practicing Health Professionals



"Eastern AHEC has always supported programs for school nurses and been wonderful to work with when I have an idea on developing a program. Most recently, I have been involved in a collaborative project with East Carolina University College of Nursing regarding case management of children with chronic illness. AHEC is a partner with us to provide continuing education for nurses involved in the project. We have also seen the need to develop a workshop for school nurses on case management to expand across the state."

-Martha Guttu, MSN, RN, BC, school nurse consultant, Northeast region

"I've had the wonderful opportunity to participate with Area L AHEC's Health Careers and Workforce Diversity Program for three years. It has truly been a life-changing experience for me. During my matriculation through the program, I learned how to work with a diverse group of people, work in a hospital setting, and enhance my research skills. We also had the opportunity to take SAT prep classes, go on college tours, and attend the annual AHEC conferences each year. It's because of their program that I decided to study health care in college."

- Katherine Parker, student
Bennett College for Women

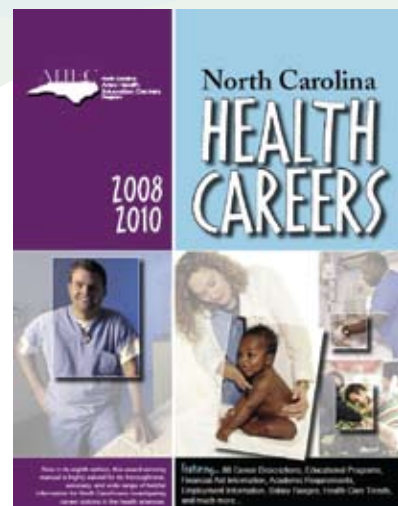


Health Careers and Workforce Diversity

Workforce data indicate that in all health professions, minority populations continue to be underrepresented relative to the overall population in North Carolina. Primary health care access can be improved through better diversity in the health care workforce. Current AHEC initiatives are designed to enhance the cultural competency and sensitivity of all health care providers and to improve the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students choosing careers in health care.

In 2007-2008, more than 27,000 individuals participated in AHEC Health Careers and Workforce Diversity activities. They included shadowing and mentoring experiences, summer experiential activities, health career fairs and forums, and cultural sensitivity training.

Since 1990, AHEC has produced and distributed 291,000 copies of *North Carolina Health Careers*, a popular and award-winning resource guide which features information on 88 careers in the health care field. *NC Health Careers* is also accessible online at www.nchealthcareers.com.





The AHEC Information and Library System provides equal access, services, and education to the state's health workforce through online access to all resources, resource delivery, client charges, reference services, orientation, training, educational and library support, and access to current technology.

In 2007-2008, AHEC librarians around the state offered 841 education and orientation sessions to more than 6,200 attendees and made 542 site visits. Total statewide resource circulation was more than 72,000.

A core function of the system is the AHEC Digital Library (ADL). The ADL provides community-based, customer-driven access to authoritative and current health information. The ADL currently provides access to e-journals, e-books, and other key evidence-based resources for more than 17,000 practicing health professionals and students. Many of these health providers have no affiliation with university medical centers and would find access to these state-of-the-art resources cost prohibitive if they were not available through affordable ADL memberships.

ADL materials are used by a wide variety of health professionals including AHEC faculty and staff, preceptors overseeing students on community-based rotations, and health providers enrolled in special programs such as the School Mental Health Training Series or the Nursing Management Institute.

In 2007-2008 the ADL provided access to several hundred core titles for exclusive use by AHEC Digital Library members and included more than 182,000 logins.

Information and Library System



"As chair of the Dept. of Emergency Medicine these past 18 years, I am well aware of the substantive and continual advances made by our AHEC Information and Library System. The growth and development of the ADL over this past decade, in particular, has permitted facile interface with the core search engines and ready access to mainstream as well as more obscure but often critical journals, textbooks and other electronic medical resources. All of these can be accessed within the library or, more importantly, from anywhere and at any time, including when answers are needed at the bedside in a timely manner."

- John Marx, MD, Carolinas Medical Center

North Carolina Area Health Education Centers

NC AHEC Program

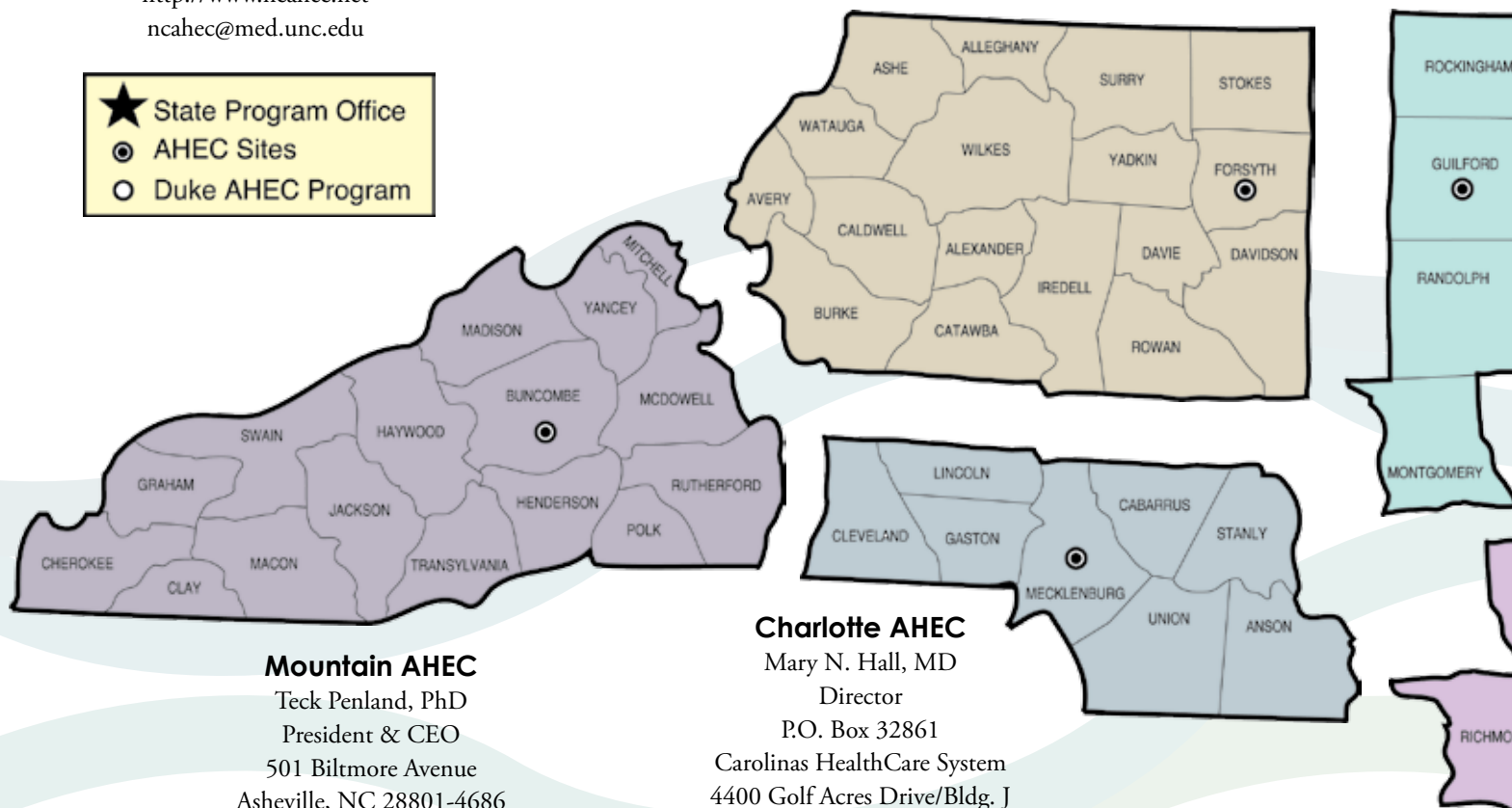
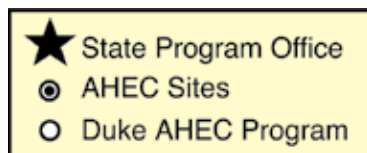
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Medical Air Operations



In 2008, Medical Air Operations celebrated its 40th anniversary – serving the state since 1968. Medical Air Operations provides air service to faculty and administrative staff who work with AHEC to deliver clinical and educational services throughout the state. In 2007-2008, more than 4,000 passengers logged 538,757 miles on Medical Air in order to reach every corner of the state with specialty clinics, educational programs, and other services designed to improve access to quality health care for all North Carolinians.

Duke AHEC Program

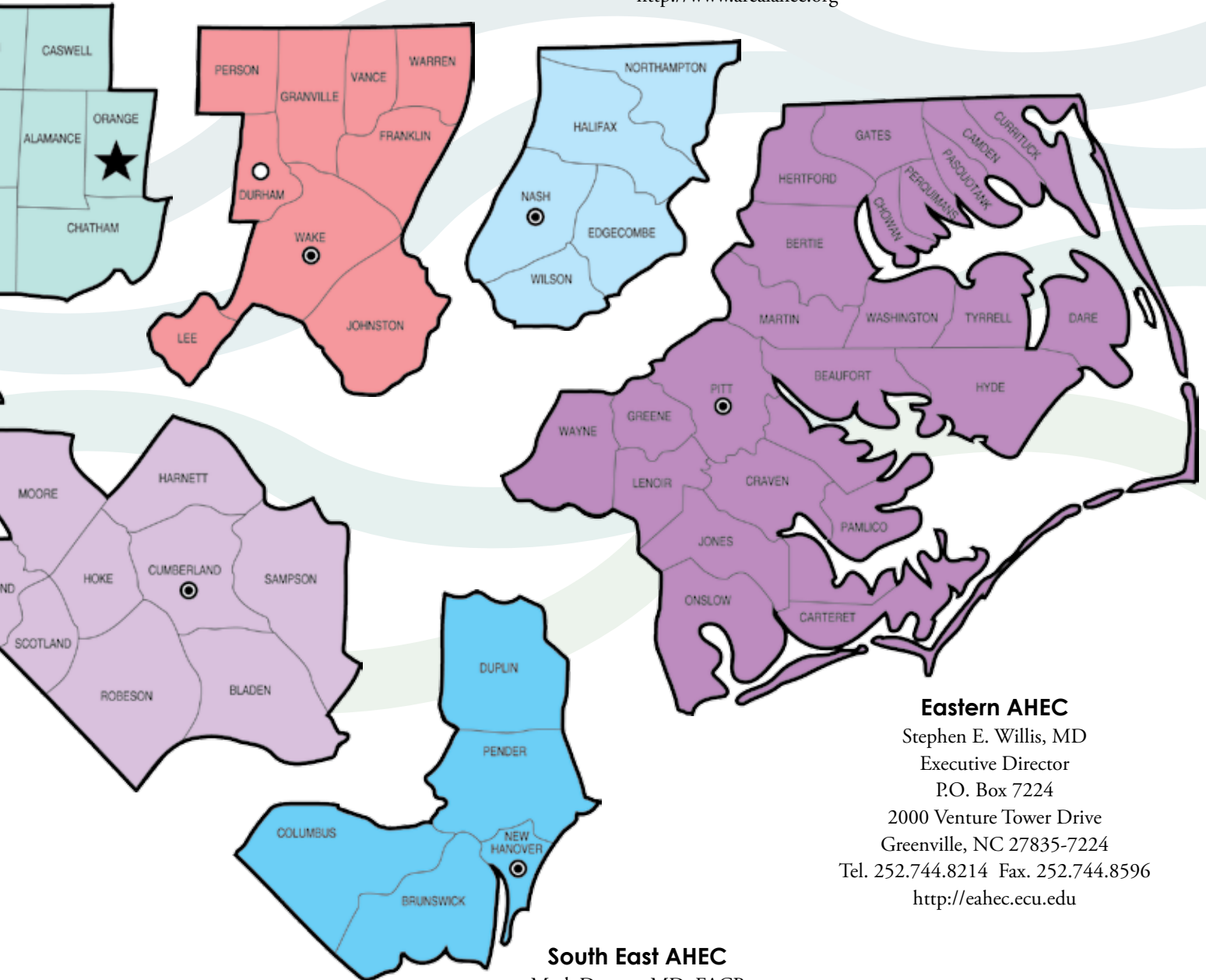
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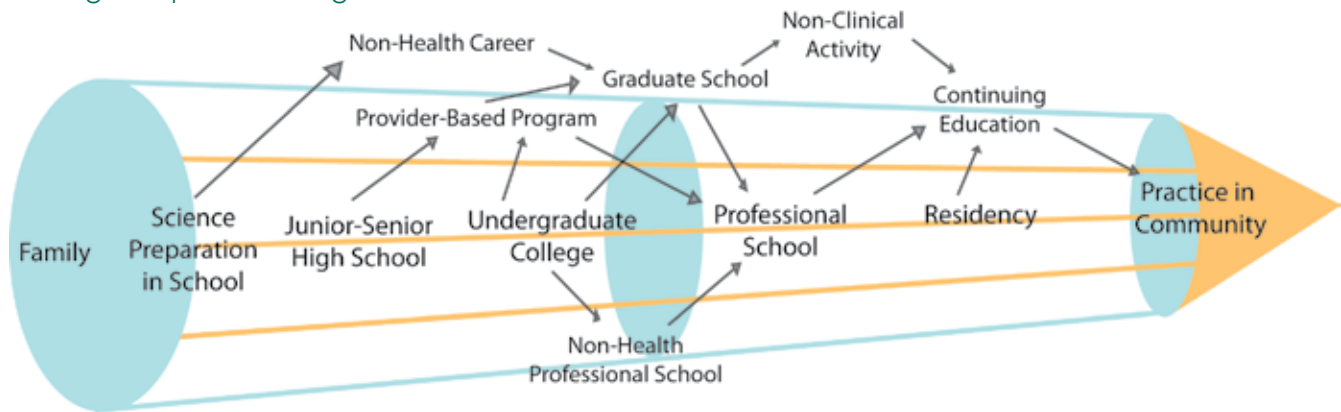
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The mission of the North Carolina AHEC Program is to meet the state's health and health workforce needs by providing educational programs in partnership with academic institutions, health care agencies, and other organizations committed to improving the health of the people of North Carolina.

AHEC educational programs and information services are targeted toward:

- Improving the distribution and retention of health care providers, with a special emphasis on primary care and prevention.
- Improving the diversity and cultural competence of the health care workforce in all health disciplines.
- Enhancing the quality of care and improving health care outcomes.
- Addressing the health care needs of underserved communities and populations.

The NC AHEC Health Careers Pipeline
– providing support to individuals in all
stages of professional growth.



THE NORTH CAROLINA AHEC PROGRAM

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